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Infidelity in a Fast Paced Society

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Are you Vulnerable to Infidelity? The Triggers and Symptoms of Infidelity

Literature Review: Infidelity

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Abstract

There are many possible factors that cause individuals to commit infidelity in modern society. Since the studies that have measured the significance of the factors causing the act of infidelity are scarce, our study aims to investigate the potential causes of infidelity and measure the significance of the causes. Through our research we have identified that COVID-19, social networking platforms, social status and income level, access to pornography, ethnicity, marital status, and sexual orientation are possible factors of infidelity acts. We have created an anonymous survey to investigate the causes, which will be measured by regression analysis. We plan to distribute the survey worldwide via a link and marriage counseling services. Our sample size will be 0.01% of the country's population and participation will be made voluntary. The results of the analysis will show which factors are likely to cause infidelity. As infidelity carries undesirable consequences, this proposal aims to spread awareness on infidelity and assist people struggling with the issue.

Keywords: Infidelity, Modern Society, COVID-19, Cheating, Relationships

Introduction

The need for human touch and affection are ingrained in most of us. In fact, studies have shown that the lack of human connection causes individuals to feel lonely, causing multiple mental issues (Richardson, et al., 2017). However, can this justify the means for infidelity among couples in today's society? Infidelity is the action of cheating towards a spouse or sexual partner (Oxford University Press, n.d.). Infidelity has two categories, emotional infidelity and sexual infidelity. Sexual infidelity is associated with sexual acts with individuals apart from one's partner, whereas emotional infidelity is associated with the development of affection for individuals apart from one's partner (Thornton, V. & Nagurney A., 2011). Consequently, the aftermath of infidelity has caused undesired outcomes for people such as depression and even suicide (Nemeth, J. M., 2012). Although infidelity is often viewed negatively and undesirable in most societies, why do individuals still resort to such acts? This intrigues us and we are determined to identify the significance of the plausible factors on infidelity.

Infidelity is known to have many cause factors stemming from social media, social status, culture, addictions, and marital dissatisfaction. However, which factor has the greatest impact on infidelity? In addition, the Coronavirus Disease 19 (COVID-19) pandemic is also known to have caused many undesirable outcomes in relationships, resulting from stress and desertion. We have not overlooked the possibility of the pandemic leading to infidelity. Thus, we aim to investigate each factor, including the pandemic, and identify which of these causes has the most significant impact on the likelihood of infidelity in this research.

Literature Review

Through extensive research, we found out that there are a few plausible factors or reasons that may cause people to cheat. The plausible factors are social networking platforms, social status, income power, ethnic, and even the COVID-19 pandemic. In this literature review, we will be discussing the existing research that has been conducted on each plausible factor and determine its significance towards the causation of infidelity.

COVID-19

According to Kumar and Nayar (2020), the COVID 19 pandemic caused devastating effects on a global scale, seeing a spike in catastrophes such as depression, domestic violence, drug abuse and unemployment. As a result of the pandemic in society, COVID-19 is likely to exacerbate the plausibility of infidelity (Gordon & Mitchell, 2020). Gordon and Mitchell (2020) hypothesized that the increased risk of couples experiencing infidelity is because of the rise in stress levels caused by the pandemic. To support the claim, a study by Mayer (2020) and Torales, et al. (2020) found that the majority of employees asserted that the pandemic is the most strenuous experience in their career. In addition, a research by Bodenmann et al. (2007) has discovered that stress levels have an inverse relationship with relationship gratification among couples. Therefore, to measure the likelihood of infidelity caused by the pandemic, stress levels appear to be a primary factor.

Social Networking Platforms

The proliferation of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter have enabled individuals to stay connected regardless of the distance. In other words, social media platforms could also be utilized for infidelity acts (Gordon and Mitchell, 2020). Due to the

accessibility of social media, Gordon and Mitchell suggested that such platforms are often used for infidelity acts (2020). Acts such as reciprocating of sexual self-portraits and cybersex are regarded as infidelity, also known as internet infidelity (Vossler & Moller, 2019). Amplifying the matter, the increased popularity of dating applications has enabled individuals to seek potential partners virtually as well. According to Takahashi (2020), founders of dating websites have commented that a fraction of participants pretended to be single. These married participants were known to access dating sites to communicate with other users apart from their partners, to receive affirmation, or to satisfy the desire of having a private sexual relationship (Takahashi, 2020). Therefore, the findings by Takahashi (2020) justifies the claim stated by Gordon and Mitchell (2020). Thus, social networking platforms are a likely cause for infidelity in today's digital era.

Social Status and Income Level

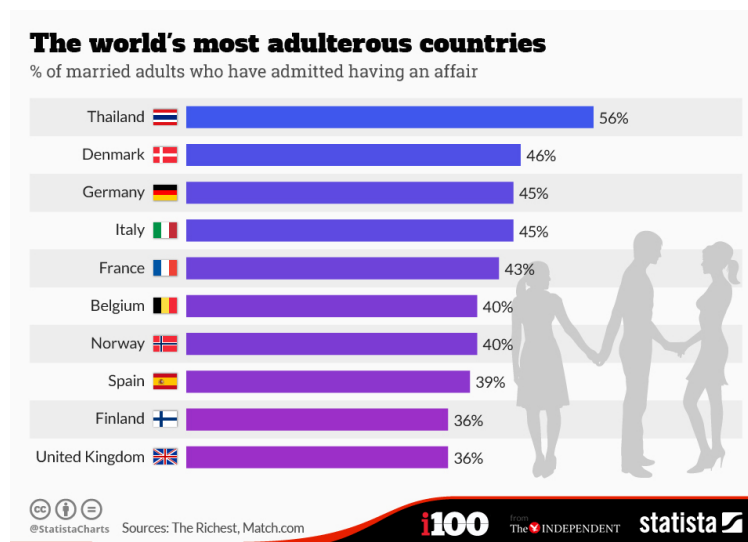
Studies have discovered that individuals with high social statuses and income levels have a higher tendency of committing acts of infidelity as compared to the average person. Orbach (2011) stated that more powerful individuals face more enticement, causing them to be more likely to commit adultery. As powerful men tend to travel for businesses that last for a period of time, the desire for intimacy might precipitate infidelity (Orbach, 2011). Similarly, the wives of these powerful men may also resort to cheating due to their need for physical affirmation and perceived sense of loneliness (Orbach, 2011). Additionally, the sense of immunity is ingrained in most powerful men, deceiving them with the idea that they would not be discovered committing adultery (Orbach, 2011). A possible reason is due to the wealth and resources that individuals possess, giving them the ability to cover up (Dana, 2020). Notable examples of famous individuals committing infidelity are Kevin Hart, Tiger Woods, and David Petraeus; a former

director of the Central intelligence Agency (CIA). These men are known to have both wealth and power, thus providing evidence that higher social status and income could lead to the greater risk in individuals committing to infidelity.

Ethnicity

Figure 1

The world's most adulterous countries.



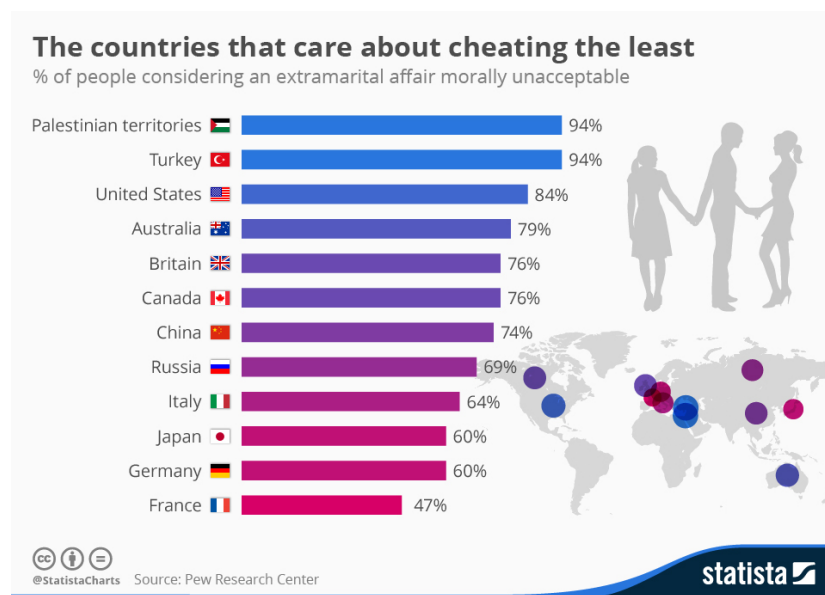
Note. Percentage of married adults who have admitted committing infidelity. Adapted from McCarthy (18 February 2015).

Studies have shown that ethnicity, religion, race and culture could have an impact on infidelity. In different areas of the world, people may have different perspectives on infidelity. A study by Wike (2020) has discovered that most countries agreed that infidelity is unethical, but less than half of the French agreed. Wike also mentioned the French president, Hollande Francois, having a high-profile infidelity case (2020). Thus, the difference in demographic could affect the plausibility of infidelity, such as the French having a more open view on relationships

as compared to other countries. In addition to findings by Wike (2020), a study by McCarthy (2015), as seen in figure 1, has ranked countries with the most cases of infidelity, with Thailand being at the top of the table. With this data, we can infer that the views of infidelity in different countries differs vastly. Thus, ethnicity could influence the rates of infidelity.

Figure 2

Countries who consider infidelity as unethical.



Note. Percentage of individuals in each country which regards infidelity as unethical. Adapted from McCarthy (21 August 2015).

In addition, religion could also be a factor of infidelity acts. Due to the different teachings and beliefs in different religions, the views of committing infidelity can differ. With the indication of 94% of citizens from predominantly Muslim countries agree that infidelity is unethical, as seen in figure 2. Thus, we can hypothesize that these citizens are inculcated to not commit infidelity, which they abide faithfully. Similarly, with one of the great Ten Commandments “Thou shalt not commit adultery - Exodus 20:14” (King James Bible,

1769/2017) the Christians regard that acts of infidelity to be sinful in the eyes of their God. This is emphasized in the New Testament, which states that:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Matthew 5:27-28 (New International Version, 1978/2011).

According to research conducted by Nagurney et al. (2019), religious individuals are less likely to commit infidelity acts as compared to those who do not affiliate in any religion. Nagurney et al. (2019) also found that individuals are 46% less likely to commit infidelity when they trust that the Bible were directly from the words of God and are 28% less likely if they believe that the Bible is inspired by God. Therefore, individuals who are more involved in their faith are less likely to commit infidelity, as such acts opposing the teachings of their faith (Nagurney et al., 2019). In the study conducted by Nagurney et al. (2019), participants were asked to select the items which are associated with acts of infidelity, such as physical contact, fantasizing, and even going to strip clubs without their partners. Those who identify themselves as religious indicated more of these activities as compared to those who were not.

Pornography

With the advancement of technology, pornography has become more accessible than ever before. Before the invention of smartphones, computers and the internet, obscene content were only available in magazines. Today, with technology being a medium to the internet, individuals are able to access pornographic contents effortlessly. An article by Silver (2018) stated that pornography websites have an estimate of 63,992 visitors and 12 newly uploaded videos every minute. This vast number of visitors reflects the accessibility of pornographic contents brought

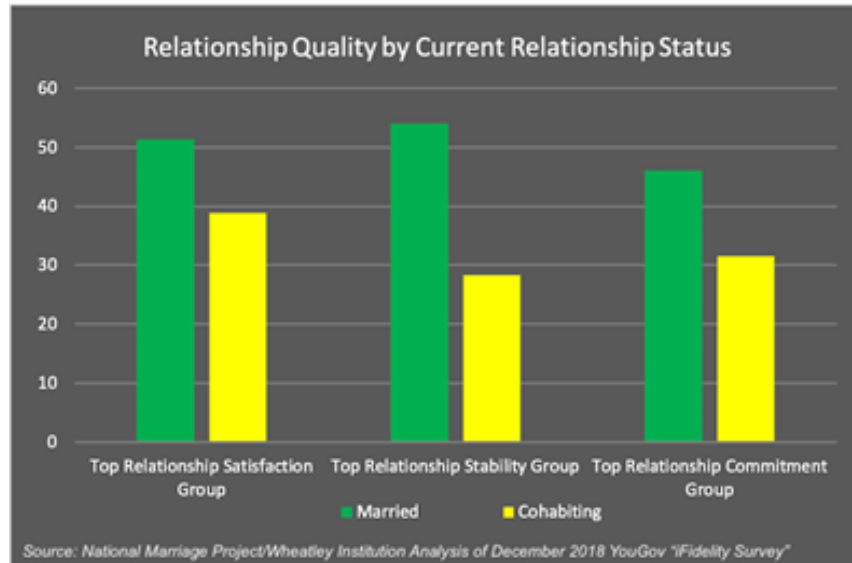
about by digitalization. Among this myriad of visitors, it is highly likely that some of these individuals are dating or married. Therefore, we investigate if the usage of porn is regarded as cheating. Weiss (2015) mentions that some users defended themselves by saying that they are only watching it, and they are not physically touching and being intimate with the opposite gender. However, most individuals watch pornography without the awareness of their partners, which is a form of betrayal, emotional pain, and loss of trust in their partners (Weiss, 2020). Hence, Weiss (2020) has associated the usage of pornographic content with emotional infidelity. In addition, a study by the University of Florida has revealed that individuals who associated with pornography are also more likely to commit physical infidelity (The Ranch TN, 2016).

Marital Status

The Census Bureau estimates that the number of cohabiting adults aged 25 to 34 grew over the years (2020). In addition, the proportion of married 25 to 34-year-olds continues to decline (Census Bureau, 2020). In 1978, 59% of 25 to 34-year-olds were already married; however, only 30% from this age group are married today (Census Bureau, 2020). The majority of married adults today claims that they cohabited with either their current spouse or another partner before getting married (Smith, 2019). In addition, many also believe that raising children in a cohabiting partnership is acceptable (Smith, 2019). Since the majority of births resulted from cohabiting unmarried couples, the popularity of “shotgun cohabitations” is rapidly increasing (Smith, 2019). The research that focused on the duration of marriage also showed that over time, men and women vary when it comes to the tendency of committing infidelity. Within 6-10 years of their marriage, women are more likely to cheat on their partner, while men are more likely to cheat after year 11 of their marriage (Census Bureau, 2020).

Figure 3

The relationship quality by current relationship status.

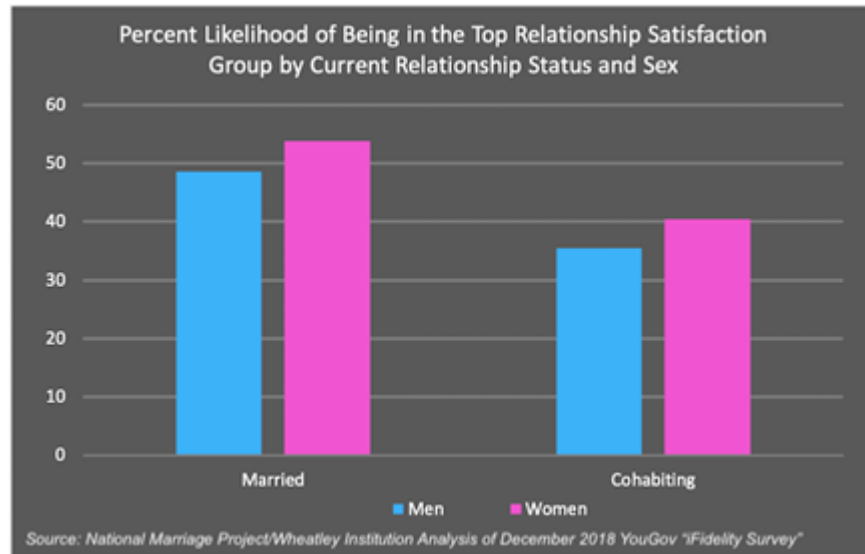


Note. The data reflects the satisfaction of couples from different categories. Adapted from Wilcox et al. (December 2018).

In figure 3, we can infer that married couples were 12% more likely to report being in the high relationship satisfaction category, 26% more likely to report being in the highest stability group, and 15% more likely to report being in the highest engagement group, as the chart below indicates. These results support previous studies showing that cohabiting relationships have lower levels of engagement, higher rates of unfaithfulness and conflict, and are far more likely to end than married relationships.

Figure 4

The likelihood of being in the Top Relationship Satisfaction.

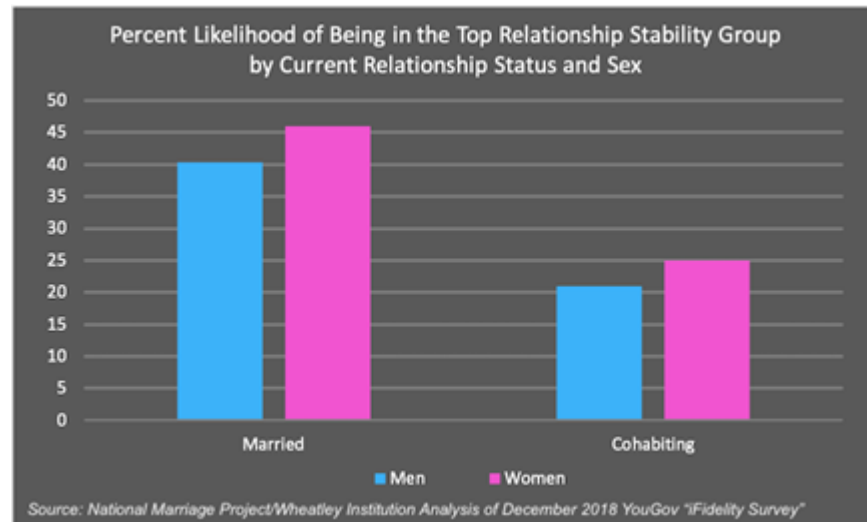


Note: The data reflects the probability of men and women in married or cohabitation relationships. Adapted from Wilcox et al. (December 2018).

In the survey, even after taking factors such as education, relationship length, and age into account, married adults were more likely to report being satisfied in their relationship. After adjusting for these variables, married women had a 54% probability of being in the highest satisfaction category and married men had a 49% probability. For cohabiting women and men, those likelihoods were 40% and 35%, respectively.

Figure 5

The satisfaction of married and cohabiting couples.



Note. The data shows the stability of the different relationship categories. Adapted from Wilcox et al. (December 2018).

Overall, inferring from figure 4, 54% of married adults were in the study, against 28% of cohabiting adults. After adjusting for age, education, and relationship length, Figure 5 shows the differences. The disparities that exist are important statistically. Thus, cohabiting relationships, including cohabiting unions that include children, are far more likely to break up than married relationships.

Homosexuality

Studies have shown that infidelity among both heterosexual and homosexual couples are declining over the years (Marcotte, 2011). From 1975 to 2000, infidelity among heterosexual married men plunged from 28% to 10%, and a fall of 23% to 14% among heterosexual married women (Marcotte, 2011). This trend was also seen among homosexual couples, 83% to 59% for

gay couples, and 28% to 8% for lesbian couples (Marcotte, 2011). The significant reduction fall of infidelity among homosexual couples was likely caused by the increasing acceptance of homosexuality (Marcotte, 2011). From the 2000 result, we can deduce that homosexual men are more likely to commit infidelity as compared to heterosexual men, however, heterosexual women are more likely to commit infidelity as compared to homosexual woman.

Key Findings of Literature Review

Overall, we have uncovered that there are multiple factors that can lead to the issue of infidelity. Firstly, COVID-19 is a potential candidate for causing acts of infidelity as it has disrupted the lives of many individuals, causing stress in their career and relationships. Therefore, we aim to investigate if the stress that was brought about by COVID-19 could be a cause of infidelity. Secondly, the proliferation of social networking platforms has allowed individuals to keep in touch with one another regardless of the distance, which includes affair partners. We have also noted the increased popularity of dating applications and aim to identify if the accessibility of virtual socializing platforms could be a factor for infidelity acts. Thirdly, some studies have seen an increase in infidelity rates among individuals with higher social status and income level. Hence, we will be investigating if the social status and income level of individuals plays a significant role in the cause of infidelity. In addition, studies have also revealed that infidelity rates across different ethnicities also vary among each other. Therefore, we ought to measure the likelihood of infidelity among different ethnicities such as race, religion, and culture. Pornography is potentially a trigger for infidelity acts as studies have shown that individuals who ingest pornographic contents are more prone to committing infidelity. Thus, our study will investigate if pornographic content could be the main factor of infidelity. In addition, marital status of individuals could cause infidelity as well. With the rising

popularity of cohabiting couples, marriage has become increasingly obsolete. Thus, we will be investigating the significance of the difference in marital status on infidelity acts among individuals. Last but not least, homosexual couples have a higher average of infidelity cases as compared to heterosexual couples. Hence, we will be investigating if being homosexual increases the likelihood of infidelity.

Research Question

What are the causes of infidelity in today's fast paced modern society?

Theoretical Framework

The objective of this research is to identify the plausible causes of infidelity in a modern society and the significant impact of each factor. As technology advances, we are living in a time where things are evolving continuously. Jobs are getting replaced by artificial intelligence, cars can be automated, even the definition of infidelity is becoming more complex (Vossler & Moller, 2019). Thus, we are offering the first study regarding the factors that could potentially cause the actions of infidelity among individuals and measure its significance. From the literature review, we have identified the plausible independent variables and the dependent variables.

Independent Variable

The independent variables are the plausible factors that we are investigating which could cause the acts of infidelity. The factors are COVID-19, social networking platforms, social status and income level, ethnicity, pornography, and marital status. These factors are gathered from a series of studies from the literature review, and we are determined to measure the significance of each factor as a trigger for infidelity acts.

Dependent and Control Variable

The dependent variable is infidelity as it is the main effect we are studying.

Measures

To measure the impact of each variable, we will be conducting official surveys and personal conversations for individuals who have admitted committing infidelity. The survey questions will require participants to indicate which factor triggers them to resort to infidelity. The survey will be conducted at marriage counseling centers. Personal conversations can be conducted anonymously if the topic surfaces. This is due to individuals that are unwilling to speak about infidelity when questioned directly.

Hypotheses

The null hypothesis is that the factors have no impact on people committing acts of infidelity. The alternate hypothesis is that the factors increase the likelihood of people committing infidelity.

Ho: COVID 19 and the other independent variables stated has no impact on the likelihood of couples committing acts of infidelity.

HA: COVID 19 and the other independent variables stated increases the likelihood of couples committing acts of infidelity.

Study Design

Research Question

What are the causes of infidelity in today's world?

Research Topic

Infidelity in a fast-paced society

Objective/Purpose

We are exploring the factors and/or causes regarding infidelity, as such cases have been on the rise, from personal experiences to highly publicized cases.

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis is that the factors have no impact on people committing acts of infidelity. The alternate hypothesis is that the factors increase the likelihood of people committing infidelity.

Ho: COVID 19 and the other independent variables stated have no impact on the likelihood of couples committing acts of infidelity.

HA: COVID 19 and the other independent variables stated increases the likelihood of couples committing acts of infidelity.

Type of Data

Cross-Sectional

Population and Sample

Our chosen population are individuals worldwide. These individuals will be picked randomly from a large group of volunteers as we do not know who has committed infidelity. Volunteers are our chosen population as they are less likely to lie as they are more likely to support our study as compared to non-volunteers. Furthermore, due to the sensitivity of the topic, we will be conducting the survey anonymously. We will be surveying individuals who have committed infidelity and have not committed infidelity as we want to determine what characteristics and perceptions led individuals to committing infidelity.

Our sample is 0.01% of individuals from each country as each country has a different population. Thus, we will be conducting stratified sampling. We will be picking 0.01% of individuals from each country as the collated data will not be accurate if we were to just take a fixed number of participants for each country. This is due to the fact that different countries have different population sizes. Hence, 0.01% will be much better than picking a specific amount.

Variables and Measures

Our study aims to identify the significance of each factor that may cause the act of infidelity. Hence, the independent variables are COVID-19, social networking platforms, social status and income levels, pornography, ethnicity, marital status, and sexual orientation. In addition, the dependent variable is committing the act of infidelity.

Independent Variables

- COVID-19
- Social Networking Platforms

- Social Status and Income Level
- Pornography
- Ethnicity
- Marital Status
- Homosexuality

Dependent Variable

Committing the act of infidelity.

Equation

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + \beta_6 X_6 + \beta_7 X_7 + \epsilon$$

Legend:

Y: Committing the act of infidelity

β : Constant

ϵ : Error term from residuals

X1: COVID-19

X2: Social Networking Platforms

X3: Social Status and Income Level

X4: Pornography

X5: Ethnicity

X6: Marital Status

X7: Homosexuality

Data Collection Methods

The survey, attached in the appendix, will consist of questions regarding the stated independent variable. We will be posting the survey link online via popular social media applications such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. In addition, to achieve our population target of 0.01% of each country, we will be utilizing SurveyMonkey's "targeted responses" function to help gather data based on specific attributes such as age, employment status and income. We will also be distributing the survey to marriage counseling services around the world, by sending our survey link to them via electronic mail. The results of the survey will also be shared to marriage counselling centers as the findings of the cause of infidelity will be informative to let the counsellors at the centers to understand their clients. Therefore, it also helps them to distribute the survey to the general public. Marriage counseling services are one of our chosen platforms as most individuals who decide to seek help for their marriage are likely to visit these places. In addition, individuals are usually more willing to open up to their issues, including infidelity. Hence, marriage counselors can request their assistance for filling up our survey to assist in this study and ensure that their information will be kept anonymous, as we do not require their names for our survey. After collecting the data, we will be analyzing the raw data, for each independent variable, by utilizing the regression analysis and test the strength of impact of these factors to the act of infidelity. The regression analysis is the most suitable method as it provides us the required information, which is the significance of the independent variables on causing the act of infidelity. Thus, it is a better way of interpreting the coefficient of each factor. As we are conducting a quantitative study, a regression analysis will aid us in

estimating the impact of multiple factors on the outcome, which is the act of infidelity. Thus, it allows us to determine if the independent variable does have a significant impact on committing infidelity or not.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, our research aims to identify the significance of the factors that could potentially result in the act of infidelity. Our findings can be utilized by marriage counselling services to better assist couples, whose relationship is in jeopardy due to a cheating partner. In addition, our findings can educate couples around the world that there are factors with strong significance in causing individuals to commit the act of infidelity. Thus, they can avoid the situations or be more cautious when going through such situations. However, we foresee that survey takers may not be truthful with their responses as the topic of infidelity can be sensitive. To overcome this issue, we will be conducting the survey anonymously, collect large samples, and make the survey voluntary. The reason for this method is that large samples are more accurate, and volunteers are less likely to lie. Hence, our population will be 0.01% of each country's population.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

1. What is your gender
 - Male
 - Female
2. What is your age (years)
 - Under 18
 - 18-24
 - 25-34
 - 35-44
 - 45-54
 - 55-64
3. How long is the duration of your relationship?
 - Less than a year
 - 1-2 years
 - 2-3 years
 - 3-4 years
 - 4-5 years
 - More than 5 years
4. In your opinion, what is considered infidelity?
 - Only when an individual had sex with another partner
 - Interested in someone else other than one's partner in secret (no sex involved)

- Talking/Texting to someone else other than one's partner in secret (no sex involved)

5. What is your religion?

- Christian
- Catholic
- Muslim
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Others (Please Specify):

6. Have you cheated before?

- Yes
- No

7. Have you ever thought of committing infidelity?

- Yes
- No

8. What is your education level?

- Degree & Above
- Diploma/ 'A' Level/ High school
- 'O' Level / 'N' Level/ Middle school/ Junior High School
- PSLE/ Elementary School
- No education

9. What is the age gap in your relationship?

- Less than a year
- 1-3 year
- 3-5 years
- 5-7 years
- More than 7

10. Most likely cause of infidelity.

- Relationship dissatisfaction
- Need for gratification
- Stress
- Fantasy

11. What kind of Social Networking Platform do you use?

- Social Media
- Dating Platforms
- Both

12. Do you watch pornography?

- Yes
- No

13. What country are you from?

14. What is your interested gender?

- Male
- Female
- Both

15. What is your annual income (USD)?

- Less than \$24,000
- \$24,000-\$36000
- \$36,000-\$48000
- \$48000-\$60000
- Above \$60000

16. What is your occupation

17. What is your position

18. What country are you from?

19. Have you committed infidelity before the pandemic?

- Yes
- No

20. Have you committed infidelity prior to the pandemic?

- Yes
- No

Part 1: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZCQ9VT3>

Part 2: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/982RSVY>